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THE

Philosopher's Mite

TO THE

GREAT EXHIBITION OF
1851.

"FOREWARNED, FOREARMED."

(Dr Collins)



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THE GREAT EXHIBITION OF 1851

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THE

PHILOSOPHER'S MITE,

&c.

PRINCE,

ALL the world attributes the forthcoming Grand Exhibition of 1851 to you as its prime originator. If we have traced your character aright, you are actuated by a sentiment more profound than any to be accounted for by mere worldly wisdom or worldly policy. Ambition to gain golden opinions from all sorts of people, by developing and practically working out a grand scheme of universal and reciprocal utility, may have been a collateral incentive. But there is still a first moving principle, higher, more worthy, and even more masonic than this. It is one identical with universal philanthropy, enunciated in the divine order to promote and practise, as well by precept as by example, love and harmony throughout the world.—In a word, a scheme to strengthen the bonds of the social charities. Should the author experience the misfortune of impressing you with a conviction that

he is meddling with affairs that don't concern him, be this his answer:—

“ I am a man, and feel for all mankind ;
Think I advise, or ask for information :
If right, that I may do the same ; if wrong,
To turn you from it.”

The best remedy for nations, as for individuals, to cure them of class-prejudice and jealousy against those whom they do not sufficiently know—that mischievous engine of war and rapine, which crafty statesmen of all ages have known too well how to employ—is to awake and read, and mutually to interchange sentiments and ideas. This is a truth, fortunately for mankind, in a fair way of taking up its position on the Rock of Ages.

Knowledge has produced between nations, between provinces of the same nation, and between classes of the same province, a spirit of amity and love, made to supersede the most rooted aversion for each other ; it has lessened that mutual scholastic hatred which cramped the souls of our learned forefathers ; it has destroyed the barrier of self-interest and jealousy, and, together with the extension of intellect and a more manly elevation of mind, it has given a greater degree of moderation and equity to man's judgment of his fellow man.

That God is love—that God is light—and that His light is the light of truth, are facts so simple that we learn them from our primers, and so sublime that as soon as our eyes are turned earthwards in pursuit of our own selfish interests in this grovelling world,

we are apt to lose sight of them for the rest of our lives. That the promotion of arts and manufactures, under judicious arrangements, leads to increase of human comforts, and tends to lessen the sum of human misery, is another fact, neither so simple nor so sublime, but which, being now generally admitted, may likewise be safely premised; for neither arts, nor manufactures, nor legislation, nor any human science, can remain stationary: all, like the precious fluid of our arteries, when once stagnant, deteriorate and decay.

“ Change is but another name for Nature :
 The world exists by it, and but for change
 All matter would to Chaos back again,
 To form a pillow for a sleeping deity.”

If the object of the Exhibition were merely to promote the gain and prosperity of the great nation which unanimously adopts you as one of its brightest ornaments, that indeed might serve as a motive strong enough for such spirits as the Gallic Fox, or the mis-called English Solomon. But, however palatable such an object might be to the industrious pursuers of commercial wealth, it would not only be inadequate, but most unprincipally. Such an incentive would not bear fire enough to kindle in your mind the noble ambition of identifying yourself with a scheme that has already cost you no small labour and intense anxiety. Neither is your aim bounded by the mere wish to give an impulse—an onward movement—to the improvement of arts and manufactures all over the world. Reflecting men recognise and give you credit for a nobler purpose; and while some doubt, and all wish well to your un-

dertaking, there are those who tremble for its success, and are jealous for your future reputation and popularity. Permit us, amiable Prince! permit us to act as your Mentor! Burn our letter, if you like; but first read and reflect upon it. Hear us, for we speak not of ourselves. Hear us, for we speak not for ourselves, but for you, and it may be for thousands. Hear us, for it will cost you but a few minutes' labour, and may save you years of misery. Hear us, because we speak *sine ambitione* on a subject which concerns us only as philosophers, while you it may affect not only as a Philosopher, but as a Prince, a Consort, a Father, a Citizen. Hear us, for at the distance and in the privacy within which we move the praise or censure of court or public would scarcely reach us. You are known to be well versed in history, let History therefore speak to you. Hear her voice, and consider us, as in fact we nearly are, past and forgotten. Please to observe, while men and matter are ever undergoing change, the laws of nature are immutable. And this is one of her great laws, verified by the concordant testimony of all ages throughout the world,—“Great, sudden human gatherings, domiciliated in a confined space, are liable to be followed by pestilence in the compound ratio of the diversity of the sources from whence they come, the diversity of breed, habits, and diet, and the length of their sojourn in such given confined space,—a liability scarcely to be obviated at all, if such accumulation be protracted, and, even if continuing for a few weeks, demanding special regulations for the public health.”

It would be a mere senseless display of book-knowledge were we to refer you to the hundreds of instances of pestilence accruing upon great international meetings. Take up what history you like; choose any quarter of the globe, any *siècle*, any nation, any metropolis, any great city, and still the fact will encounter you. You have near you good and truly learned men, who will refer you to the historic proofs that the most widely-spreading and most exterminating pestilences of Great Britain followed upon, and were traceable to, sudden and enormous influx of foreigners. But if you will judge for yourself, read the reign of Edward III., and there you will trace the tragic consequences of such influx at the founding of the order of the Garter. What followed at Windsor? The Black Death, the early history of which is still the subject of intense curiosity among the learned, and has been, within the last few years, reprinted both in Germany and in England. That freak of Edward cost England more than a third of its population.

Again, in 1483, Richmond brought with him, to deliver his country from a so-called tyrant, a motley army of aliens, and thus introduced the Sweating Sickness, developed in the invading army soon after their landing at Milford Haven. In some towns one-half of the population perished by it. If the work of the learned Caius, the founder of Caius College, be too professional for your perusal, you will find that my Lord Bacon, at a subsequent period, embodied an account of it in his great work.

Will you go with us to the East? What have

been the consequences of the great Oriental sacred gatherings in that quarter? Please to ask your East India Company how many thousands of deaths by malignant disease were traceable to such national meetings? For Italy, in the mediæval ages, the records of the Medici will suffice. You will there learn how frequently pest recurred from accidental and forced collections of people, driven from one city to another by the calamities of war; so frequently, indeed, that the mere contingency of approaching risk prompted authority to shut the city gates, and with them the gates of mercy, on their fellow-creatures. And here, Prince, we tremble, while hastily flit before our memory the names of great and good men who were execrated, defamed, nay worse, murdered, because a mob will always concentrate their rage on individuals and stupidly personify the cause of pestilence, instead of tracing it to its complex origin, for which they have not the mind or the patience. Even kings have thus been maligned, and found Homers to immortalise the error. This makes us tremble for your popularity. Is it well merited? What matters? Does not history tell you, that a shadow of a pretence suffices for mob etiology? Search the archives of your fatherland. Do you not call to mind that influx of invaders brought with it pestilence? Thank God! the English are only going to be visited, and not invaded. But does Nature, in her above-recited law, make any exceptions? Does she except those brought together from distant parts to join in the praise of the Deity or in the defence of religion? Ask

History again, and she will answer you. Whether of yore, in the temple of Solomon, or in our own time, on the plains of Hindostan, such popular collections, ever found to be dangerous, have demanded classification and division by the Jews in the one instance, and secured the intervention of the Indian Company in the other.

The piety of the good St. Louis availed not to save him and a great part of his army from a similar catastrophe. Surely men are not so insensate as to expect an immunity from a law which is not allowed to be inoperative, even when too many are gathered together in His name, as Christian history also suffices to show, and as has been exemplified even in our own time in various parts of Europe? If you dislike to read medical authors, turn to Froissart. If you require modern documents for modern calamities, you can have them from your India House, from your Board of Control, from your Army and Navy Medical Boards. That the sun shines at mid-day is not clearer to our minds than the embryo danger of your monster Exhibition, however noble that monster is intended to be. It is that same law which influenced the introduction of the pestilence of 1483, 1485, 1506, 1517, 1528, 1529—a law as clearly definable as that two multiplied by two make four. It is notable that the second recurrence here cited took place just two years after all England had offered up prayers and thanksgivings for the withdrawal of what has ever been considered a divine scourge, and just at the period when the short-sighted wisdom of

the learned had led them to infer that the calamities of the past were the best guarantee against the danger of the future. The same law influenced the introduction of the plague in 1665 ; for both restorations brought with them a motley influx of foreigners. Whether moved by the consideration of the jealousy which might accrue from the presence of an army of foreigners, or struck by the repeated examples of pest occurring in his own time, arising out of a contingent *plus* population, that wise and sagacious monarch, Henry IV., dismissed with largess all his alien supporters, and thanking them warmly for the services they had rendered him, remitted them to their vessels at Plymouth, to sail from thence to Brittany,—not allowing them to await either the issue of his contest with Richard, or for his own coronation contingent upon the deposal of that monarch.

All well-informed men are aware that those heavy visitations of ancient times were traceable, like cholera, as coming from Asia ; but it is equally notorious, that when international intercourse was limited, throughout four outbreaks Germany and the Netherlands were exempt, while at the fifth, in these last countries, pest developed itself at the great conference at Marpurg, between Luther and Zuinglius, on transubstantiation,—a curious omen for the present religious tendencies of England.

Your chronicles will show you, that even meetings of rudimental parliaments, and common assizes, have frequently been the means of exciting sudden outbreaks, uniformly ascribed to excessive animalisation

of houses not capacious enough for their ordinary and contingent inhabitants. We will not here speak of the centralisation of large armies. Military annals will tell you, that it was only at the expense of millions of lives that heroes, taking the initiative, at length learned how to obviate the danger. The sudden influx of conquerors in the cities and forts of the conquered have in our own time been seen to be fatal to both. The ancient records of Windsor will show that crowded guests have proved as equally fatal to their host as the visit of Athenian interlopers on the return of the Heraclidæ to the Peloponnesus. When we consider that it took forty-seven years to develop the English plague in Germany, and then only through the contingency of a religious conference, while, on the other hand, a conference for glory spread the Black Death throughout this country, we cannot shut our eyes on the light which history throws upon us. It matters not how large the habitation or how small the hovel, or how large the town or how small the village, if both are over-animalised, the solitary hovel is less dangerous than the metropolis. A given number of cubic feet of air is essential to man's health, and provided the external atmosphere, like that of all crowded cities, is surcharged with noxious vapours, the solitary hovel is safer than the crowded mansion. London saw a great influx of foreigners in 1814, and although of a class under official regulations, and chiefly under the surveillance of superiors, the records or bills of mortality will show a great increase of disease, if we are

not much deceived. Napoleon made a mere infant demonstration in 1803, a miniature of your grand scheme, and even that comparatively small influx of population increased the mortality of Paris.

Let us consider the habits of all foreigners visiting any of the metropolitan cities of Europe. They mostly congregate in quarters where their fellow-countrymen had for centuries been wont to assemble. In London, lodgings are expensive. The purlieus of Leicester Square are a favourite quarter for them. Cupidity of lodging-house keepers induces them to receive an overplus. Upwards of threescore foreigners have been known to lodge, or rather to bundle, in one house in Castle Street, three in a bed. Such could never be the case with the more opulent; but in all great visitations, the wealthy and industrious are followed by irregular adventurers of all sorts. What number of visitors, may we be allowed to ask, does your Committee expect? We have heard of 40,000. We have heard of 100,000. We have heard of a million. And we think the last a nearer approximation to the probable truth. Patriotism has attracted great bodies of men to her altars. Religious enthusiasm more. But the incentive now held up to the world, if philosophers have understood human nature, will prove that the worshippers of Mammon exceed all the other worshippers on the face of the earth. Tournaments and glory have had their altars in the open air, and have allured their thousands; but this is the age of Mammon, and its votaries will be countless,—their name, Legion. Your fine mind has been too severely schooled

in philosophy to be swayed by any argument unsupported by facts. Please to observe a whole group of such facts in the according testimony of all nations.

We have already said, that the severest distempers of an epidemical character have travelled from Asia. The annals of the various European medical boards show, that among the military, the most violent outbreaks of cholera have occurred in barracks where an undue and accidental influx of troops has over-animalised such buildings. This is so notorious, that it led to the above-mentioned general order from the Governor of India in council, prohibiting the reception into barracks of detachments of soldiers on their march. A like contingency, civil but not military, threatens your grand and benevolent scheme; the more dangerous, because a voluntary influx of free citizens from all parts cannot be so well controlled, nor can their mode of living be regulated by any regimen or discipline. The magnificent accommodations of London, together with the salutary improvements recently introduced, may do much to contravene the evil; but so long as foreigners congregate in the lowest purlieus of your metropolis, and so long as you have a river reeking with nocent vapours, appreciable even by the crassest scent, our confidence cannot be very satisfactory.

Our youthful impressions left on the mind by the graphic sketch of the plague of Athens, and above all of the cause of it—a crowded population compelled together by the calamities of war, present to our mind no comfortable materials for reflection. The

addition of the *débris* of half a million of visitors, will act as potentially as the sudden and considerable increase of any other poison habitually received into the human body. However repulsive such a subject, you are bound to consider that the Asiatic epidemic varies in its character in different places, and at each recurrence varies in one and the same place. Inappreciably infectious in England in 1849, we have seen it officially pronounced by a competent board at Malta in 1850, to be not only infectious, but communicable by contact; and should it re-appear, it may show that same character in London in 1851. The most afflicting and appalling mortalities experienced throughout all Europe, have arisen from over-animalisation inseparable from immense accidental influx. This is a broad, intelligible fact, for the thousandth time offered to the notice of man, and exemplified within the last few years throughout the greater part of the known world. Utterly insensate must we be, if it fail to convey to us a warning. Men may boast as they please of the newly-acquired sovereignty of mind over matter, but princes and peasants are alike impotent to say, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther." Pestilence, like the flux of the sea, moves by laws immutable, though least understood. Thus much, however, is known, that monster collections of masses in confined space, especially when derived from various and distant sources, are commonly found to bring with them all the heterodox materials necessary for pestilential developement, in that mystic caldron of human calamity, an over-grown metropolis. Wise

men, *par excellence*, of all nations, have pronounced that every gigantic scheme for human improvement has encountered dire reverses, never contemplated by the benevolent originators. Hence, whilst the less enlightened heathen has pronounced the gods invidious, our holy religion teaches us to magnify Him who delights to show man his own littleness, by confounding the mighty, and exposing the blunders of human wisdom. If we may believe divines all over the world, the condition of mankind was never more ripe for the lesson. What sickened Charles V. of grandeur, and has so often brought enthusiasts to a cruel and sudden exit? How noble the scheme for slave abolition! How sickening the history of that as of former crusades of all sorts! “Although a man be ever so perfect among the children of men, without God’s wisdom he is as nothing.” The history of Icarus is but a fable, but every fable hath depth and meaning in it, to be fathomed by the plummet of man’s understanding. We are old, and have seen much; we have read more: yet we have never known or read of any gigantic scheme for the improvement of the human family, which has not cost its originators much anxiety, even when ultimately and partially successful. All such schemes have led to events, which, if they could have been foreseen, would have paralyzed human exertions. The lofty ladder of human knowledge, like that of human ambition, was predestined to be ascended step by step. Whenever man, intoxicated at having attained a few extra rounds, looking in the clouds and scorning the base degrees by which he did ascend, attempts a new mode of soaring

on Icarian wings, his flight, uniformly found to be short and imperfect, is followed by a rapid descent, and not unfrequently by summary destruction. Even language, that vast piece of diversified mosaic, that most wonderful work of man's ingenuity, has accumulated only bit by bit, and, like all other complex fabrics, the slow growth of the genius and industry of ages, acknowledges the varied labour of millions. The sacred story of the tower of Babel hath both a meaning and a moral. While such considerations carry with them no reasons for inactivity or indifference, they proffer a strong one for caution and observation, not merely in the English sense of the word, but rather in the old Roman meaning of a sharp look-out. Since the time of Edward III. we know of no invitation to foreigners so unlimited as that of your Committee. It would be interesting to you to read that of the royal monarch—you will find it in the library in Windsor, and you will observe that its grasp was small, when compared with that of your great international summons. If, at that remote period, the conveniences and accommodations of the English hosts were less, so also was the population and the number of the guests. If English accommodation is now greater, it is equally true that your great river is tainted, and no longer the pure and silvery Thames of 1344. The same remark will be strengthened by reference to all the subsequent periods of epidemy, occurring in the last two centuries. We hold it strange, that while in 1665 your annalists were labouring to trace the plague from the Mediterranean,

they neglected to reflect that they had lived five years under a monarch who, having sold his subjects and their interests for sundry pieces of money, had during that period encouraged an influx of the loose and disorderly from all parts of the Continent to a metropolis not adequate to supply them with well-ventilated residence. Looking at the statistics of the Registrar-General, and comparing them with those of other parts of the world, we must be led to believe that the mortality in the populous towns of Great Britain, under the recent capricious epidemic, responded in nearly the same relative proportion of cases, deaths, and population, to the statistics of most other parts of Europe, and certainly left you, by right, in no blind confidence as to immunity for the future. Those who admire you in public, and those who love you in private, must naturally feel anxiety that this grand undertaking should terminate so as to be a memorial of the great and good qualities of your head and heart. Your eagerness for action proceeds from the most laudable motives, among which not the least is your sensibility to the evils which have accrued from international ignorance, and your ardour to obviate such evils. Yet would we have you call to mind, that among all the most dreadful circumstances attending upon pestilence, history shows few more revolting to the human mind than the wicked calumnies with which men, smarting under the rod of Divine chastisement, have permitted themselves to load the good and great, whose names have been ever used as scapegoats in the hour of tribulation. Perhaps your

Board of Health will tell you that the storm has passed over, and that in the natural routine of cause and effect we may expect an immunity for 1851. If they attempt to square this opinion by history, they must go back again to their books.

“There is reason to believe,” says the greatest ornament of the healing art, “that new poisons are formed through the instrumentality of new causes, brought into action by the increasing population of large towns.” No doubt they will honestly tell you, as we ourselves tell you, that in Malta, only a few days’ sail from London, and from whence manufacturers are coming to expose their elaborate jewellery and other productions, cholera, having acquired a new feature, is propagated by contact like the plague. Is that a fact demanding consideration, or will it go unnoticed? They will tell you, that in various parts of the Continent it still breaks out, recurring again and again. From the shores of the Mediterranean already you have communications with standing committees.

Doctor Russell, a great writer on plague, noticed long ago that in the Levant, epidemic diseases, travelling from other parts, do there acquire the character of being communicable by contact. The period of incubation of cholera embraces fewer days than would suffice to convey passengers from the Levant to Southampton. From America your offers of exhibition must be numerous. From this continent, also, men are now conveyed to our shores in less time than nature requires for the developement of latent infection. In the German states the disease has recently

broken out, and the same contingency is here still more probable. Clearly the same contingencies might occur, independently of such Exhibition? Yes; they have occurred. Every great port this year has had isolated cases; and in several foreign ports, at the moment at which we now write, cholera is raging. Now, with regard to the occasional instances, such as have occurred during the past summer, they are controllable, being nothing but like petty bursts of flame after a general conflagration. But, to carry on the simile, although the language of metaphor is ill-adapted to science, feed any flame, however small, with successional additions of suitable materials for combustion, and your conflagration will revive. Whenever the like incidents occur in the heart of a great town, under the favouring circumstance of a suddenly and largely increased population, it will create all the difference we see between a spark falling upon a rug, or lighting upon a barrel of gunpowder. The boasted discovery of the slow progress and forewarnings proffered by cholera, apply only to any ordinary condition of population; in the extraordinary condition of a sudden duplication of its numbers, slow developement is at variance with all the records of history.

The forthcoming Exhibition will furnish that material, and the over-crowded vessels which will convey your visitors are equally well calculated to be the prologue to the tragedy. A Government truly paternal is as much bound as any hospitable citizen to provide accommodation and safe residence for all guests, however numerous, if it chooses to invite them.

The stranger coming from afar, no matter what his native language, knows whose guest he is, and steps to your shores on the faith and reliance he has on British hospitality. The Government is unquestionably bound to look to the means of accommodation, although afforded by its citizens at the expense of the guests, and equally bound to see the number does not exceed the accommodation. It stands pledged by the laws of the domestic hearth to impose regulations to secure the health and safety of all the incomers, rich and poor, so far as it can take cognizance of either. Having, by public invitation to all and divers nations, adopted a course which will bring the contingencies and liabilities to pestilence on a footing with those of Ostend and Venice, when those ports were the great marts of the world, and with Malta in our own time, it becomes the Home Government to take all precautions against the calamities which history has indicated ; for never was there any human gathering in either of those places, or in any other town in the history of the civilised world, near so extensive or so motley as that which London may expect for 1851. The experiment being on a scale entirely new and unprecedented, cannot be judged of by any sufficient historic parallel, or be anticipated without anxiety. It is required to be proved what is the largest number of human beings within a given area, where already the atmosphere is much polluted, that can be brought together, without pestilential developement. That is just the problem. Reference to the history of sieges will neither aid nor comfort us ; reference to the great gatherings at merchant-fairs or

conferences, ancient and modern, affords no adequate parallel, and certainly imparts no confidence. Again, reference as to the amount of influx of visitors on any former occasions, in any part of the new or old world, can avail but little towards a correct calculation of the probable extent of the forthcoming visitation; because both the expense and difficulty of international communication, in all former times the bar to dangerous aggregation, are now reduced to a mere trifle. Neither can the official Hygeist lose sight of two important facts, that men coming from certain latitudes are prone to undergo dangerous fermentations of the blood; and, secondly, that in the modern mode of travelling men no longer reach our metropolis in groups of some half-score at a time, but by hundreds and thousands between the rising and setting of the sun. In fact, then, the philosopher has not only to look for an exhibition, but for an exploration, since the results remain to be explored. In England, where every man's house is his castle, through which, although the winds of heaven may penetrate, the emissaries of Government are admitted with jealousy, the difficulties of police will be greater than in any metropolis of Europe. The great jubilee of Rome created much embarrassment, and left its pestilential impress for years; but it was a mere carnival in comparison. Your learned historians, in whose society you delight, will assure you that the Crusaders of yore carried with them into various parts of Europe diseases completely exotic, and, till the wars of the Saracens, quite unheard of in any European climate. New maps, gold and diamonds, were not the only produc-

tions which were brought to Europe after the discovery of new worlds.

There is nothing more notorious than that the same increase of international communication, which has yielded to mankind increase of resources, has also introduced increase of disease. To multiply proofs by going to the resources of literature, wherever letters are not extinct, would be to weary you to no useful purpose. No history,—no poetry,—no national code,—no religion, exists without some allusion to the danger of vast multitudes. We are not ignorant how unpopular, how repulsive, and peculiarly at this period how threadbare and exhausted, must any subject be appertaining to public health, or glancing at public pestilence. No nation has a greater disgust to such considerations than the British people. During the calamity, indeed, their social system supplies ample means for relieving exigencies; but, even when the danger of approach is most imminent, they hesitate to converse, and much less to read, upon it. The danger once over, they have a sullen pleasure in burying and forgetting its horrors; and, unlike other nations, their public thanksgiving once recorded, they consider the whole subject as a sealed book, which no poet, no painter, no architect, must presume to commemorate, and with regard to which the less said by the annalist the better. Your nobility and your statesmen are not exempt from the same national peculiarity. Infinitely inferior as all your social arrangements are for public health to those of ancient Rome, yet many of your legislators churlishly think that too much has

already been conceded to the public demands in this particular department.

It cannot be disguised, that all such social improvements have been forced upon Ministers, not so much by the power of general outcry, as by the keen remonstrance and biting sarcasm of a few enlightened and persevering philanthropists. The very men who have been foremost in the legislature, and most eloquent in exposing the evils of neglect, do themselves loathe the word sanitary, and all its organisation. This prejudice will continue till the class of men whom the recent Acts of Parliament have blended with the machinery of government becomes better known to them. Then, and not till then, each will find his level. Meantime, future historians in after ages will record their surprise that in this extraordinary country king, lords, and commons provided for a people all sorts of laws, pains, penalties, and imposts, eighteen centuries before they ever thought of bestowing upon them public baths, or an organised department for the care of the public health—a duty which Rome recognised and practised in the earliest infancy of her republic. If Cæsar, who ruled the destinies of the world, aspired to fill such an office, canvassed for and accepted it, we must know more of the calibre of intellect, and of the largeness of heart, and the extent or grasp of humanity, of each and all the now surviving disciples of Charles James Fox, before we can understand the apostasy with which they affect to despise an ingraft on the public service, more valuable to society and to posterity than any single measure which their party

or their opponents ever had the honour to introduce. The prophetic hint of that great humanist, that the time might come when the popularity of his measures should enable the men who carried them, if not carefully selected, to advance the cause of corruption and prodigality through channels heretofore unknown, stands recorded in his introductory chapter to his unfinished history of the reign of James II., and sufficiently shows how profound a knowledge of mankind his historic reading had imparted to him. To use his own words, "What a field for meditation does this short observation from such a man furnish! What reflections does it not suggest to a thinking mind upon the inefficiency of human laws, and the imperfection of human constitutions! How vain, then, how idle, how presumptuous is the opinion, that laws can do everything! and how weak and pernicious the maxim founded upon it, that measures, not men, are to be attended to!" How much more glorious had it been for the pupils of this truly great man, had they themselves originated, and with hand and heart carried out, upon a less niggardly scale, this long-desiderated boon to the public, instead of having it forced upon them!

The public admonitor is seldom welcome in any department, but least of all in that of health. A nation lulled into a dangerous security, like a man stupified with a poisonous dose of a narcotic drug, is irritated at any attempt to arouse him, and uses the transient moments of returning consciousness only to manifest fitful anger towards the impertinent intruder. Thus we find "security is mortals' chiefest enemy."

Gibbon remarked, "that this fatal security, like the predestination of the Turks, aided the progress of the fifty-two years' epidemic, from 542 to 594, for no restraints were imposed on the free and frequent intercourse of the Roman provinces; and from Persia to France the nations were intermingled by wars and emigration." What would he say now? Procopius, speaking of that same malady, observed, "that it always spread itself from some sea-port to the inland country; and in the repetition of its visits it at last showed itself exclusively in those places and classes which had before escaped." "This is a matter of fact," says Dr. Friend, "which is a better argument than any reasoning how far this distemper may be imported and spread by commerce and communication." "Flitting about the world," says Howell, "for fifty-two years, it was one while declared to be contagious, and at another not communicable, so capricious was its character." Gibbon seems puzzled that, while the fellow-citizens of Procopius were satisfied by some short and partial experience that the infection could not be gained by the closest conversation, Euagrius records that it was for the most part catching.

Nature has enacted these seeming contradictions over and over again, and has thus delighted to set the multitude at variance, while the few truly learned know that it is a mere question of amount of an infectious power, varying under varying circumstances, but still always to be considered at a value, sometimes high, sometimes very low and obscure.

Cæsar, in his "Commentaries," speaks of the pesti-

lence of Messala, and of that which thinned his own ranks after he was declared an enemy to the republic, and in both instances his readers may trace the mischief to a sudden overcrowding of population in confined space as the chief cause among other causes. Henry IV. of France seems to have had a similar strong conviction ; for, when all was prepared for the christening of the royal children at Paris, though the barricades were erected for the procession, and the company in part assembled, he countermanded his orders, and assigned another part of his kingdom for the ceremony. What Vattel has said of the natural law of nations equally applies to the law of epidemics. It is immutable, and nations can neither change nor escape from its influence. It depends not on human opinion ; and in its operation it is most harmonious, even where it appears to be most discordant. It is the duty of all good Governments to acquire the best possible knowledge of both, for the happiness and safety of nations. If a Board of Health limit its duties to cleansing and draining, it is but a mere commission of sewerage. Their duties ought to extend to survey of buildings, plans of streets, the accommodation afforded at theatres, and other places of public amusements, the state of the markets, the prevailing quality of food, and the condition of crews and passengers on their arrival. In the present condition of our quarantine, no imported animal is allowed to pass through the gates of our docks without a certificate, except man. Passengers and crew have free egress and ingress ; no officer of health takes cognisance of

them; while a dog or a pig, a sheep or a cow, undergoes the strictest examination of the veterinary officer of the docks. State Hygeia is, however, yet in its infancy, and demands every indulgence.

The happiest omen for the future well-working of its machinery may be accepted in the very judicious appointment of its first chairman,* a nobleman who, at his majority, stood conspicuously forward as the assertor of public morals, and first courageously unfurled his ducal banner as the opponent of lordly vice, disdaining the trammels of fashionable dissipation. May the throne never lack nobles of equal dignity and moral courage! Such men are not merely the pillars of the State, they are the best guarantee for the security of a throne, and for the duration of the liberties of a people. There is talent enough at Gwydyr House to enable the Board to anticipate evils and to provide the means of prevention. It is an ædilian duty, which, under the Cæsars, was ever recognised as necessary to be attended to during unusual inpourings of population; and the free admission to the public baths conceded at Rome furnishes a hint for modern policy. In the same spirit, not only as an act of national generosity, but as a stroke of sound policy, all public gardens, zoological, horticultural, and botanical, should be gratuitously opened to the visitors, under arrangements of your Committee; thus furnishing supplementary lungs to the increased population, and insuring a daily distribution of the masses. We are obliged

* Health of towns.

to confess, that while such an act of hospitality would be honourable, the withholding of it is neither fair nor equitable, nor altogether without discredit. Other places of a more sacred nature we leave to the discretion of their several authorities, hoping that national honour will gain the ascendancy over the pitiful consideration of pence. Even under ordinary condition of travellers, nothing is more becoming than hospitality to foreigners; but when they are our invited guests, it is no longer a virtue merely, it is a duty. The population of London admits of an obvious division, into the ephemeral, or day-tenants, and the nycthemeral, or day-and-night tenants. The vast tide or moving streams of life which we encounter in our principal thoroughfares is made up of these two divisions. In the City, the ephemeral constitutes the majority; in fact, there is no accommodation sufficient to receive that larger portion by night, as well as by day. The very appearance of the City in the daytime would indicate a crammed and overcrowded population; but the hours of business once over, houses, offices, public buildings, and streets, are relieved of the gorge. There comes an interspace of at least twelve hours for atmospheric depuration. This is the explanation of the general healthy condition of what appears by day an excessive multitude without elbow-room. In other parts of London proper, the majority are nycthemeral, sojourning by night as well as by day. But in every part there is now a considerable proportion habitually sleeping out of town by night. This reflection should furnish

to your Committee a hint as to the propriety of encouraging ephemeral tenancy among your town visitors, and nightly sojourn at such a distance from the Exhibition, as may lead to ensure health, economic residence, and easy access by rail. It must not be forgotten, that the consideration of the above facts carries with it proof positive that London proper has not accommodation for the masses of people who get their livelihood in it by day. However complex, however difficult, however repulsive to minds not inured to it, the subject of the health of the people may be, the moral person—or, in other words, the Government invested with the public authority—is indispensably obliged to procure all the knowledge and information essential to the security of the people; not to leave all to blind chance, or passively to wait for the upshot of events.

The multitude may doubt and sneer, gazetteers may deride, and critics may lay on the lash, but so long as we reflect that cholera has flitted up and down the broad universe for nearly forty years, and is within a few days' reach of our own coast, doing its work of destruction in seven of the chief ports of the world, we shall console ourselves with the reflection of Gibbon:—"While philosophers believe and tremble, it is singular that the existence of real danger should have been denied by a people most prone to vain and imaginary terrors." He alludes to the French, but the quotation admits of a more extensive application.

The invidious task which we have voluntarily imposed upon ourselves draws near to a close. The

praise or censure of mankind is to us appreciable only in the degree in which we feel it to be merited. The true philosopher, as was well remarked by your greatest statesman lately deceased, prefers the safety of his fellow-creatures to the suffrages of his friends. In parting, please to allow us to offer to you an interesting historical proof that the healthiest city of the world, under the best sanitary arrangements, cannot long withstand the tainting influence of sudden and extensive increase of population. The example which we shall offer affords a curious contrast to the plague and fire of London in 1665-6. In the instance we are going to cite, the plague occurred a little more than a year after the general conflagration of A.U.C. 817, A.D. 64 :—

“Of the fourteen quarters into which Rome was divided, four only were left entire ; out of ten, three were reduced to ashes, and the remaining seven presented nothing better than a heap of shattered houses half in ruins. The ground which, after marking out his own domain, Nero left to the public, was not laid out for the new city in a hurry, and without judgment, as was the case after the irruption of the Gauls. A regular plan was formed ; the streets were made wide and long ; the elevation of the houses was defined, with an open area before the doors, and with porticos to secure and adorn the front. The expense of the porticos Nero undertook to defray out of his own revenue. He promised, besides, as soon as the work was finished, to clear the ground, and leave a clear space to every house, without any charge to the occu-

pier. In order to excite a spirit of industry and emulation, he held forth rewards, proportioned to the rank of each individual, provided the buildings were finished in a limited time. The rubbish, by his order, was removed to the marshes of Ostia, and the ships that brought corn up the river were to return loaded with the refuse of the workmen. Add to all this, the several houses built on a new principle were to be raised to a certain elevation, without beams or wood-work, on arches of stone from the quarries of Alba or Gabii; those materials being impervious, and of a nature to resist the force of fire. The springs of water, which had before that time been intercepted by individuals for their separate use, were no longer suffered to be diverted from their channels, but left to the care of commissioners, that the public might be properly supplied, and, in case of fire, have a reservoir at hand to stop the progress of the mischief. It was also settled that the houses should no longer be contiguous with slight party-walls to divide them, but every house was to stand detached, surrounded and insulated by its own inclosure."—*Annals*, book xv. A.U.C. 817, A.D. 64.

The reader will conclude, with Tacitus, that these several regulations were, no doubt, the best that human wisdom could suggest; for, with regard to their sewerage, we know that they were already provided with magnificent channels, which are even now the admiration of the curious.

While reading the above account the magnificent city seems to rise before our view, new, fresh, and cleanly, and London to sink into comparative insigni-

ficance. The contemplation of it was calculated to make the impious incendiary, if guilty, proud of his crime and confident of the public health, yet within three months of its completion a devastating pestilence followed. Intoxicated with the success of his mighty undertaking, ambitious of the praise of mankind, more for the qualities of his genius than for those of his heart, Nero invited all mankind to come and witness his magic labours and to hear his most sweet voice. The extravagant excitement of the time, itself a great source of disease, the false glittering glory of his monarchy, the luxury and profusion squandered upon adventurers, rendered, says Tacitus, this new city the common sink, into which everything infamous and abominable flowed like a torrent from all quarters of the globe. The extent of the assembly may be inferred from the fact recorded by the same historian, that five thousand spies were employed to observe the conduct and demeanour of the audience at the public spectacles. Again, let the historian speak for himself:

“To the blood and horror that made this year for ever memorable, we may add the vengeance of Heaven, declared in storms, and tempests, and epidemic disorders. A violent hurricane made the country of Campania a scene of desolation; whole villages were overthrown, plantations were torn up by the roots, and the hopes of the year destroyed. The fury of the storm was felt in the neighbourhood of Rome, where, without any apparent cause in the atmosphere, a contagious distemper broke out and swept away a vast number of the inhabitants. The houses were filled with dead

bodies and the streets with funeral processions. Neither sex nor age escaped; slaves and men of ingenuous birth were carried off, without distinction, amidst the shrieks and lamentations of their wives and children. Numbers, while they assisted their expiring friends, or bewailed their loss, were suddenly seized, and burnt on the same funeral pile. The Roman knights and senators suffered the common lot of mortality, but death delivered them from the power of the tyrant, and for that reason they were not regretted."—*Annals*, book xvi. A.U.C. 818, A.D. 65.

Only four years after this calamity the slothful and contemptible Vitellius entered Rome with sixty thousand men in arms, made up of thirty-four different nations, and a still greater number of retainers and camp-followers. What was the result? Nature, true to her laws, as Tacitus himself elegantly shows us, again developed pestilence, first breaking out in the purlieus of the Vatican, among the Gauls and Germans.—TACIT. *Hist.* book ii. sec. 93.

It was precisely at this period, A.D. 64 to 69, that the Christians were made the scapegoats for the abominations of heathen Rome. Because, though by the wise considered innocent of either calamity, they were detested for their innovation, and reckoned as the sullen haters of the whole human race. They were put to death with exquisite cruelty; and to their sufferings Nero added mockery and derision, and the imputation of having fired the city and brought down the vengeance of the gods.

Inscrutable Providence! Nearly eighteen centuries have passed over the generations of man, and the spiritual flame which pervaded Thy afflicted saints, enabling them to endure the cruelty of Nero and to bear with fortitude the fangs of beasts and the scorching fire, now hovers, diffusing the beauty of holiness, over the crown of Thine anointed—more lovely and bright than the jewels of her diadem, shining as a beacon-light to nations, to impart to them hope and just confidence in the future, that in Thine own good time Thy kingdom shall come!
Vale, ornatissime Princeps! liberavi animam meam.

TANTUM!